



THE House of Representatives
State of Hawaii

News Release
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**HOUSE BILL PROPOSES TO TRANSFER KAWAI NUI
MARSH TO STATE**

Media invited to tour Kawai Nui Marsh on Sat., Feb. 11th – 9:00 a.m.

HONOLULU—State Rep. Pono Chong has introduced a bill that transfers the bulk of the land at Kawai Nui Marsh to the state and requires the city to continue maintenance of the marsh's drainage system.

House Bill 3056 directs the city to comply with Act 47 by transferring the marsh lands by July 1, 2006. It also mandates the city to continue maintenance of Kaelepulu drainage channel and all feeder drains into the channel. The bill is scheduled to be heard Friday, Feb. 10 at 8:45 a.m. in House Conference Room 423.

"I believe the interests of the marsh are better served by a state agency involved in watershed management," said Rep. Chong, D-49th (Kaneohe, Maunawili, Enchanted Lake).

For decades, community organizations have been working to preserve and restore Kawai Nui Marsh as a nature preserve, and cultural and education resource. The marsh, encompassing approximately 830 acres of land in Kailua, Oahu, is the state's largest remaining wetland and an ecological treasure. It has been identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a primary habitat for endemic and endangered Native Hawaiian birds. Last year, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands designated the marsh as a wetland of international importance.

Kawai Nui Marsh has been a source dispute between the city and state over land ownership and maintenance, a situation that could cause a loss in federal funds earmarked for wetland restoration. Rep. Chong hopes the bill will help redefine responsibilities and ensure that restoration projects continue.

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Kawai Nui Marsh Transfer

The transfer of marsh lands to the state has been endorsed by Ho'olaulima Ia Kawai Nui, a consortium of eight community organizations that for decades has worked on preserving and restoring the marsh. Consortium groups include Kawai Nui Heritage Foundation, Hawaii's Thousand Friends, Kailua Hawaiian Civic Club, Kailua Historical Society, and others.

To help familiarize media with the marsh, Rep. Chong, with the help of Hawaii Thousand Friends, has organized a tour of the marsh's points of interests, including Ulupo Heeiau, wildlife habitat areas, and proposed project sites, on Saturday, February 11 from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Those wanting to join the tour should contact Rep. Chong's office at 586-9490.

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